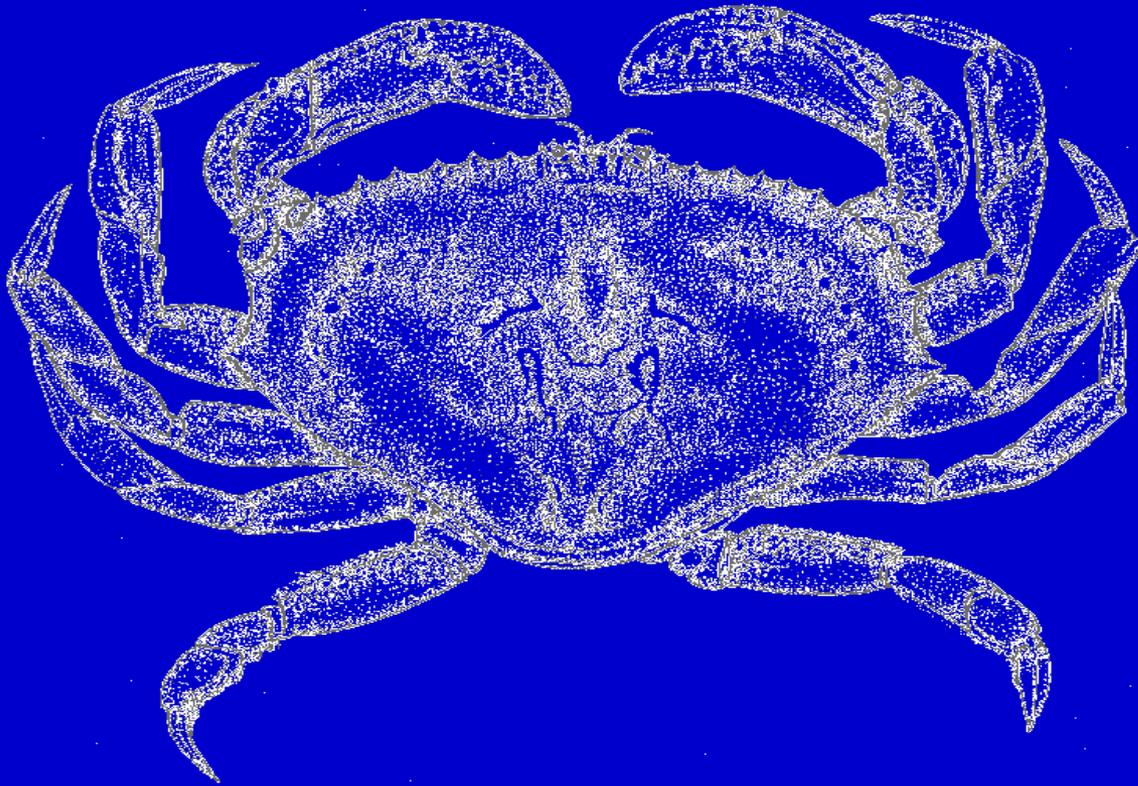


# 2013-14 Puget Sound Dungeness Crab Fishery



**Rich Childers; Puget Sound Shellfish Manager, Fish Program**

**Mike Cenci; Deputy Chief of Enforcement, Enforcement Program**

**Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting**

**April 12, 2014**

# Presentation Outline

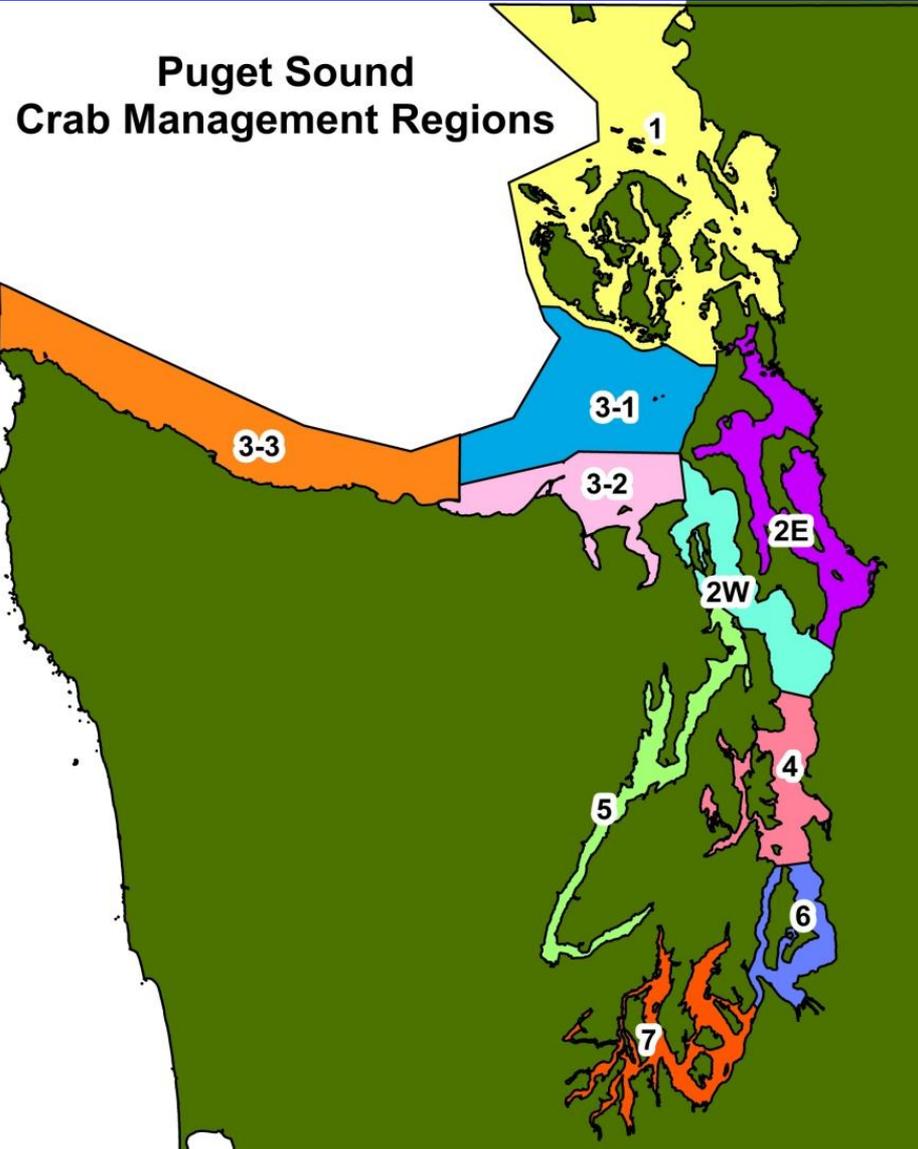
- Key elements of the Puget Sound crab fishery policy (C-3609)
- Performance and harvest of the 2013 Puget Sound commercial and recreational crab fisheries
- 2013 recreational crab fishery education and outreach program
- Crab fishery regulation compliance data collected by enforcement and fishery management staff

# Puget Sound Crab Fishery Policy C-3609

- A revised policy was adopted by the Commission on October 1, 2010
- Protect and conserve the Puget Sound Dungeness crab resource
- Provides for recreational and commercial fisheries
- Maintains a base recreational season from year to year
  - July – Labor Day 5 days per week, including weekends
  - October – December winter season 7 days/week (dependent on state share remaining after summer season)
  - 5 crab daily bag limit
- Develop and implement cooperative education and outreach program

# Puget Sound Crab Fishery Management

Puget Sound  
Crab Management Regions

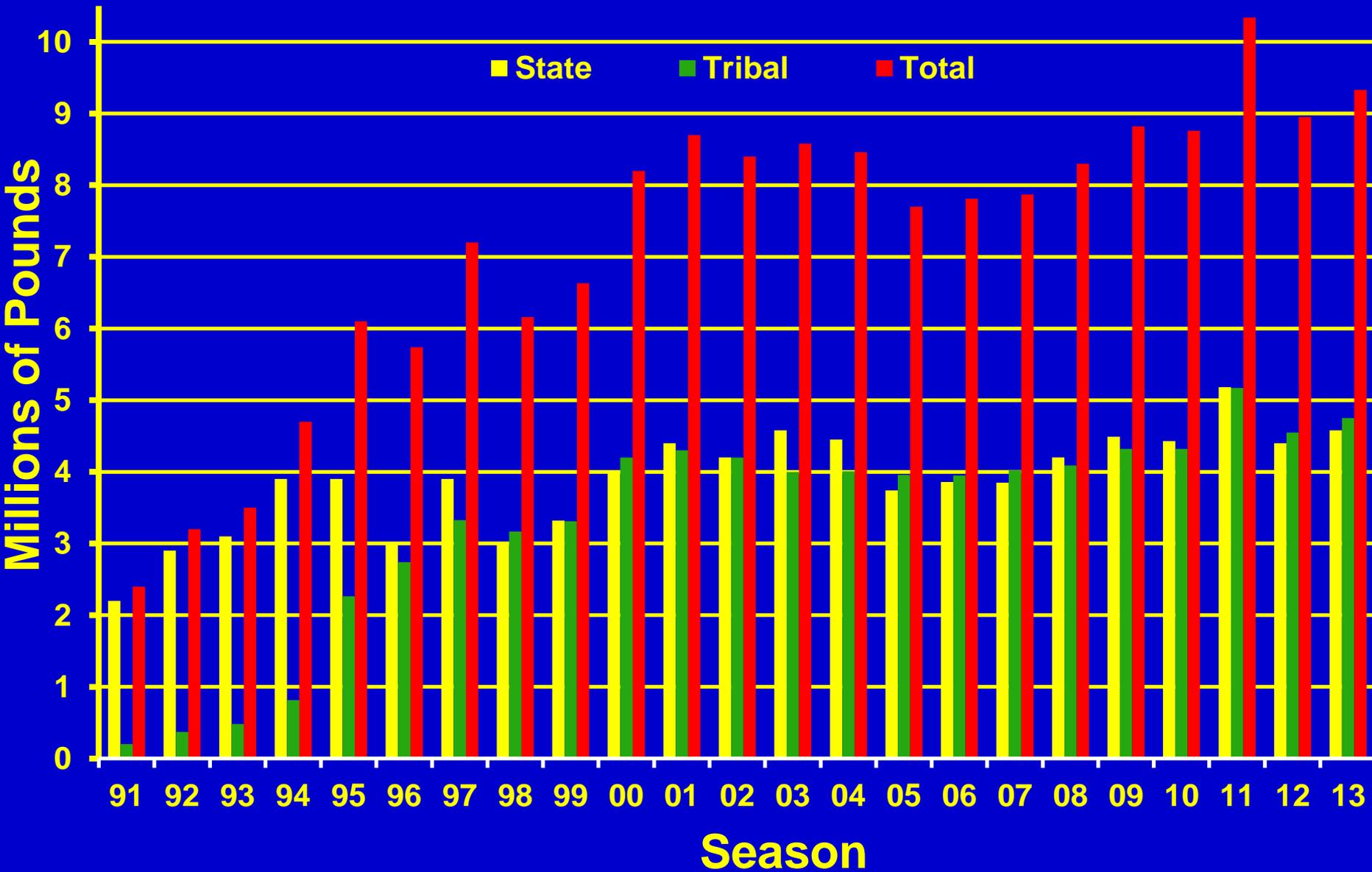


- Seven management regions
- Policy C-3609 provides commercial and recreational opportunity in Regions 1,2, and 3. Regions 4,5,6,and 7 are reserved for recreational only
- Region specific annual harvest quotas are set pre-season to increase stability and predictability in fisheries
- Regional State/Tribal harvest shares are established annually through co-management agreements.
- June through May management period with soft-shell closures during spring and early summer months

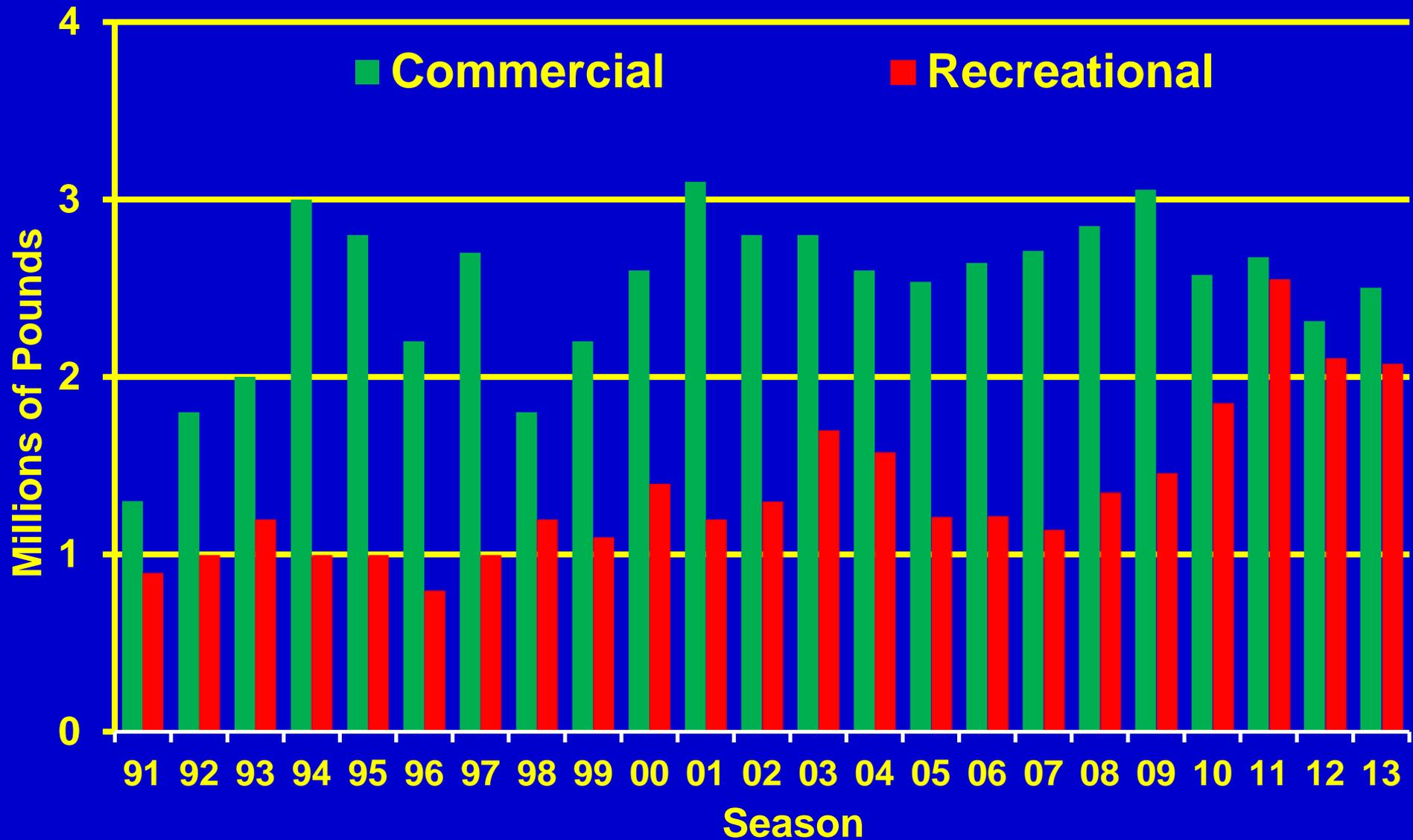
# 2013-14 Commercial and Recreational Fisheries



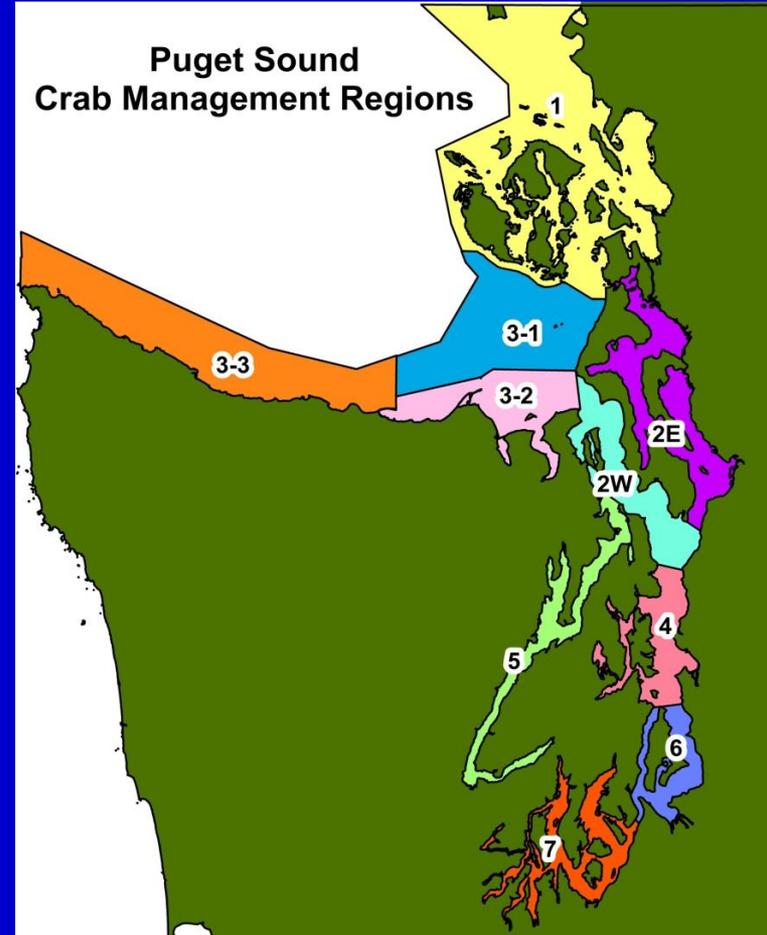
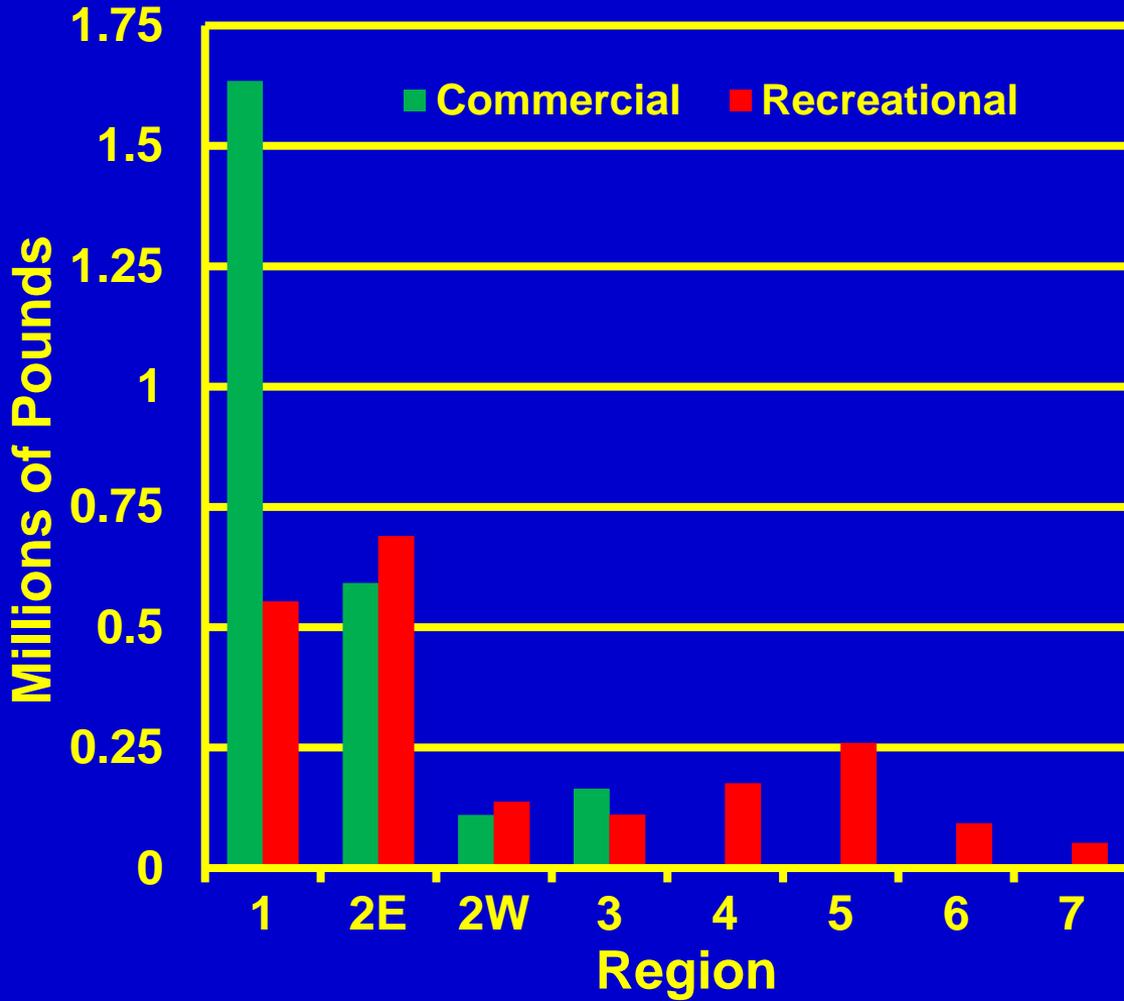
# State and Tribal Dungeness Crab Harvest in Puget Sound (1991-2013)



# Dungeness Crab Harvest for State Fisheries in Puget Sound (1991-2013)

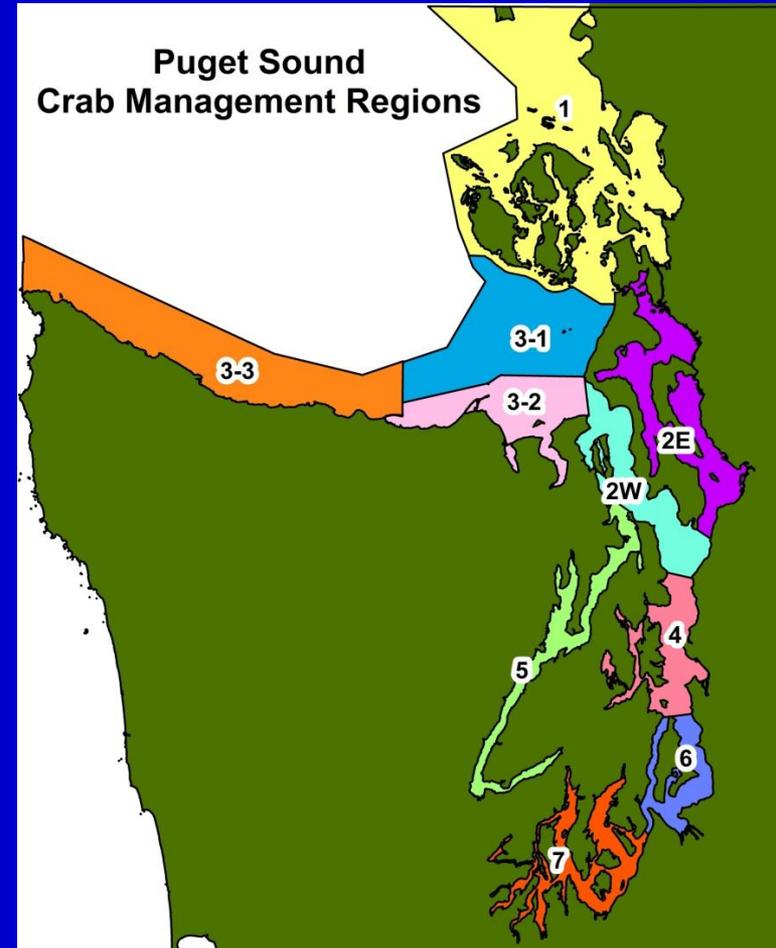


# 2013 Dungeness Crab Harvest for State Fisheries by Region



# Recreational and Commercial Fishery Openings in 2013-14

Region	Summer Recreational Season	Winter Recreational Season	Commercial Fishery
1	Yes	Yes	Yes
2E	Yes	Yes	Yes
2W	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	No	
5	Yes	Yes	
6	Yes	No	
7	Yes	Yes	



## 2007 – 2013 Recreational Dungeness Crab Catch Card Statistics

	Season	CRC Issued	CRC Returned	CRC Reported Internet	Percent Returns Internet + Returned
<b>Summer</b>	2007	210,327	34,400	32,373	32%
	2008	210,893	26,037	43,919	33%
	2009	236,665	37,128	72,172	45%
	2010	208,462	29,406	77,472	52%
	2011	230,355	31,222	89,095	52%
	2012	200,711	26,504	79,895	53%
	2013	214,692	26,236	90,379	54%
<b>Winter</b>	2007	157,905	10,281	6,388	11%
	2008	207,143	10,993	10,871	11%
	2009	89,259	11,909	27,382	44%
	2010	70,763	9,633	27,346	52%
	2011	28,514	4,675	13,899	65%
	2012	27,711	4,508	13,357	65%
	2013	29,638	4,419	15,223	66%

## Number of “New” Recreational Crab Fishers 2010-2013

<b>Season</b>	<b>Total Crab Endorsements Issued</b>	<b>New Recreational Crab Fishers</b>	<b>Percentage New Recreational Crab Fishers</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>213,013</b>	<b>73,845</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>237,129</b>	<b>82,944</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>209,957</b>	<b>57,548</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>214,685</b>	<b>62,291</b>	<b>29%</b>

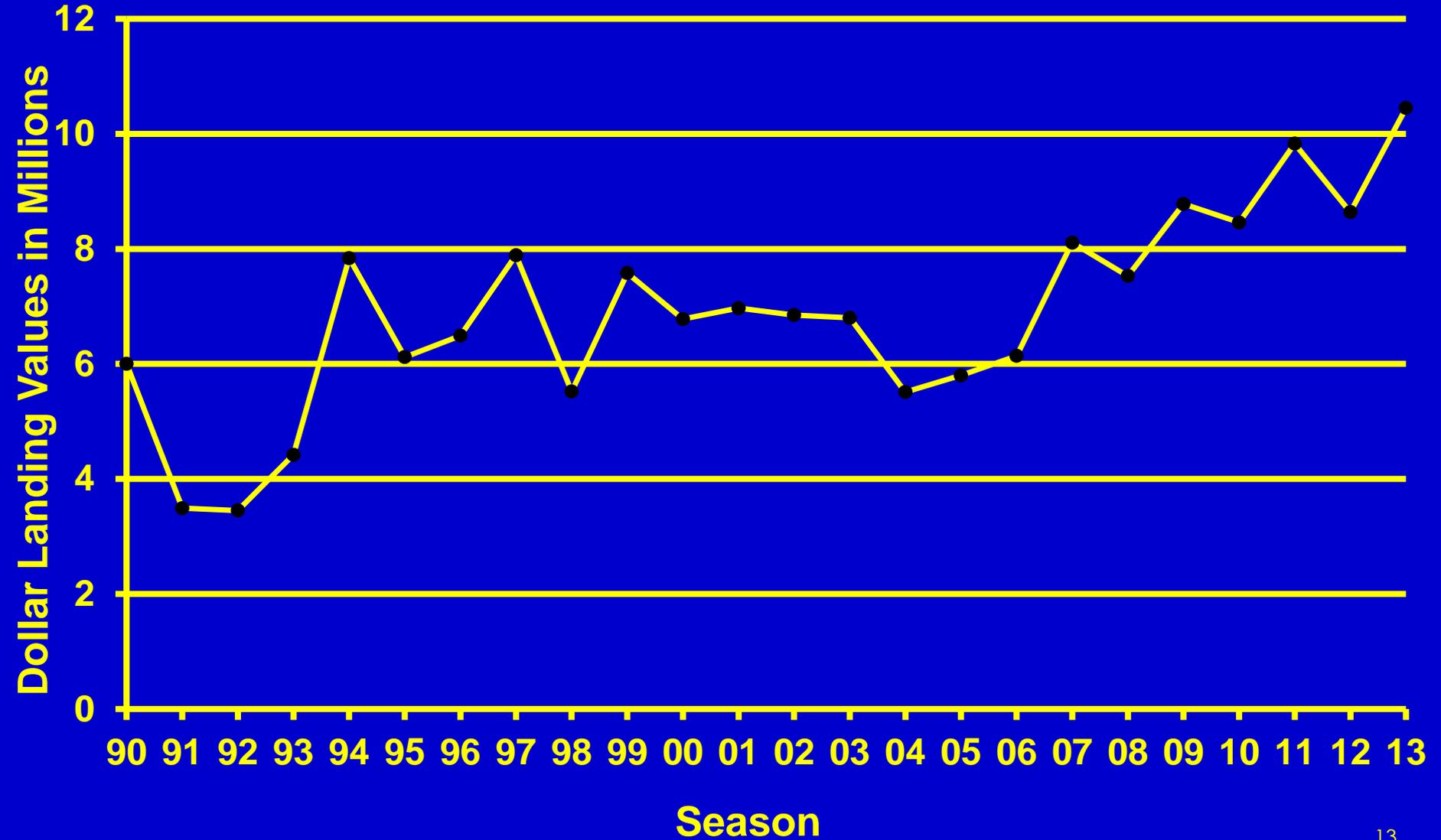
# Number of Puget Sound Commercial Dungeness Crab Licenses Owned by Individual Fishers or Companies

- Limited entry fishery since 1981
- Limited to 250 transferable permits

Number of Licenses Owned	2013-14 Season	
	Number of Owners (%)	Number of Licenses
1	77 (56%)	77
2	46 (34%)	92
3	6 (4%)	18
≥4	8 (6%)	62
<b>Totals</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>249</b>

# Total Adjusted Ex-Vessel Landing Values for the Puget Sound Commercial Crab Fishery (1990-2012 actual) (2013 projected)

Ex-vessel values were adjusted to 2013 dollars using a Consumer Price Index (CPI) conversion maintained by the United States Department of Labor Statistic



# Education – Outreach – Enforcement



# Education and Outreach Program

Long Term Goal Improve Regulation Compliance in the Recreational Dungeness Crab Fishery

- Key Program Message: Know Before You Go
- Education and Outreach partnership and steering committee
  - WDFW fishery managers and enforcement officers
  - Puget Sound Anglers
  - Coastal Conservation Association
  - Northwest Marine Trade Association
  - Recreational crab fishery advisors
  - WSU Beach Watchers
  - County Marine Resource Committees (MRC)

# Education and Outreach Program Focus

- Resource conservation violations
  - Possession of undersized or female crab
  - Rot cord/Escape cord
- Resource allocation violations
  - Exceeding daily limit
  - Failure to record and report catch
- Closed Season crabbing

# 2013 Education and Outreach Program

- Crabbing in Puget Sound brochures
  - Mailed to households that purchased crab endorsements
  - Distributed by license dealers and at education-outreach programs
- 11,000 crabber packets including escape cord sheet, waterproof crab guide, and crab brochure (~4,000 also had crab gauges)
- Awarded \$ 25,000 contract with WSU Beach Watchers for a crab fisher education and outreach program
- Boat shows and sportsman events
- Pre season newspaper and radio coverage
- WDFW offload site crab fisher interviews
- WDFW enforcement crab fishery emphasis patrols
- WDFW website link specific to Puget Sound crab
- “Report your catch” reminder post cards mailed to all fishers

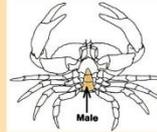
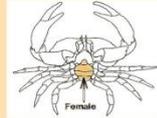
# 2013 WDFW - WSU Beach Watchers Crab Education Program

- **Goal:** Educate crab fishers on conservation oriented crabbing rules and methods
- **Focus:** Reduce gear loss, rot cord use, crab measuring and identification
- Implemented and coordinated through Beach Watchers in four counties
- Provided training and coordination for 56 volunteers
- Assembled 11,000 crabber information packets
- Contacted 8,390 crabbers face-to-face and 49,251 indirectly



## Eat More Crabs! Keep Your Crab Pot!

In 2011, over 10 million pounds of Dungeness Crab were harvested from Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. At the same time, 12,000 crab pots are lost each year, killing 178,000 male harvestable crabs that could have been harvested! To sustain a healthy population for our kids to catch AND to be able to go home with crabs and your crab trap, follow these simple steps!



### Harvest Only Male Crabs, 6 1/4" or larger!

These are the crabs that don't contribute as much to future populations. Be sure to measure crab just inside the outer most points, and release all females.



### Use More Line!

Use a line that is 1/3 longer than the water depth you are crabbing. Currents can pull a pot sideways and boats can drift into deeper water while pots are being set.

### Use Weighted Line!

One way that pots get lost is when a passing boat cuts your floating pot line. To sink your line, use leaded line that you can purchase or add weights.

### Watched Pots Never Roam!

Stay by your crab pots and you are more likely to come back with them all at the end of the day!



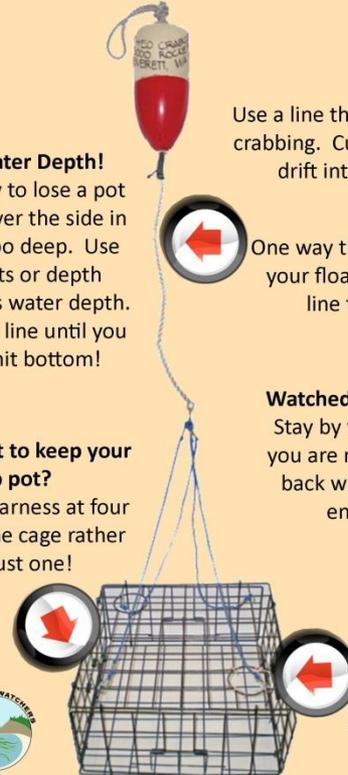
### Know the Water Depth!

The easiest way to lose a pot is to toss one over the side in water that is too deep. Use nautical charts or depth finders to assess water depth. Hold on to your line until you feel the pot hit bottom!

### REALLY want to keep your crab pot?

Attach the harness at four points on the cage rather than just one!

**Use Escape Cord!** Biodegradable cotton cord will break apart if a pot is lost to allow the crab to escape. Using escape cord can reduce the number of crabs killed by 30 or more annually!



# 2013 Offload Site Survey

- Goal: Collect CRC compliance data after crabbing trips are completed
- 26 survey locations were randomly selected
- Surveys distributed throughout the summer season (July 1 to Sept 1) on weekdays and weekends
- 103 site surveys conducted
- 819 crab fishers interviewed (758 successful crabbers)
- 3011 crabs were measured



# Results of the Offload Site Crab Fisher Surveys

Category	Offload Site Contacts (Successful Crabbers Only)			
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Possession of undersize crab	10%	4%	6%	3%
Possession of female crab	0.3%	0%	0.3%	0.1%
Exceeding daily limit	0.7%	0.2 %	0.5%	0.3%
CRC in possession	98%	98%	97%	99%
CRC violation (fail to record)	13%	11%	12%	9%

# WDFW Enforcement Crab Rule Compliance Emphasis Patrols



- 37 officers involved in summer in 2013 emphasis
- Primarily on the water contacts
- 3,494 fishers contacted in 2013 (3,814 in 2012, and 2,816 in 2011)
- 4,031 crab checked in 2013 (5,864 in 2012 and 4,729 in 2011)



# Results of Enforcement Emphasis Patrols

Category	Enforcement Contacts (Successful Crabbers Only)			
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Possession of undersize crab	10%	8%	9%	8%
Possession of female crab	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%	1.01%
Exceeding daily limit	3.3%	3.2%	1.7%	1.4%
CRC in possession	98%	98%	98%	98%
CRC violation (fail to record)	24.0%	19.4%	19.9%	16.5%

\* Proper marking of recreational gear (buoys) is a continuing problem

# Enforcement – Fish Management Closed Season Compliance Emphasis patrols

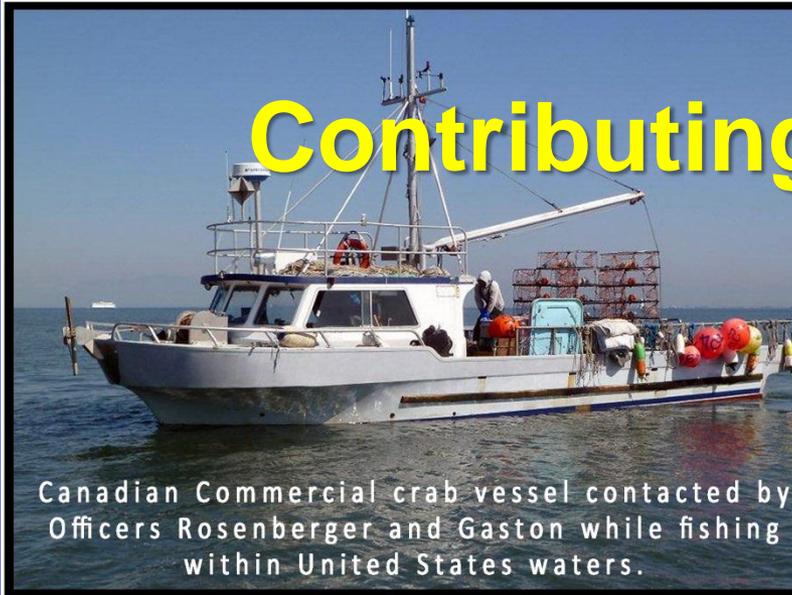


# The Proactive Approach



- **Closed season shellfish pot emphasis patrols initiated in 2011, and expanded in 2012 and continued in 2013 included all Marine Areas**
- **Recovery efforts focused on removal of unauthorized/lost/illegal gear before it becomes "derelict"**
- **Actual % of derelict pots (i.e. lost or abandoned) is unknown**

# Contributing Factors



Canadian Commercial crab vessel contacted by Officers Rosenberger and Gaston while fishing within United States waters.



WDFW Patrol Vessel #1

➤ **Lost or abandoned**

➤ **Closed season poaching**

➤ **Foreign fishing incursions**

➤ **Non-compliant gear**



Now that's a lot of seized crab gear!

# Puget Sound Closed Season Shellfish Pot Recovery Results



	Patrol Days	Pots Recovered
2011	42	1,319
2012	44	1,024
2013	28	405
Total	114	2,748

# Violator Types

Hardcore - Opportunistic - Confused / Uneducated





# OPERATION ARGENT SALE

WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife - Police



## Synopsis

- Nearly 2 year investigation involving unlawful trafficking in undersized, undocumented and closed season crabs.
- Involves 2 Wholesale fish dealing companies.
- Involves 25 harvesters
- 10 unlicensed non-traditional markets (restaurants and nail salons).

# Involvement

- **Non-tribal wholesale dealer operating under a Tribal buyers license, purchased undocumented and undersized crab from Tribal members.**
- **Harvesters sold undocumented/undersized crab and halibut to WDFW Undercover Officers.**
- **Covert sales of crab to Restaurants/Nail Salons. Market so glutted that crabs sold for \$1.50-\$2.00 each.**

# RESULTS

- Operation culminated in three search warrants, boat and vehicle seizures and multiple suspect interviews utilizing State, Tribal and NOAA Officers.
- Analysis of financial and State licensing records revealed over \$125,000 (62,500 lbs) of crab that cannot be reconciled with mandatory catch reports.
- Hundreds of charges possible for unlawful fish dealing activity (unlicensed), felony catch accounting violations, and felony trafficking in undersized and closed season crabs.

# Summary

- **Recreational fisheries were open 5 days per week in most regions from July 1 through Labor Day (Sept 2)**
- **Winter recreational openings occurred in all regions except 4 and 6**
- **Commercial fishery occurred in regions 1, 2, and 3 as per policy C-3609**
- **In partnership with organized angler groups and NGOs an extensive crab fishery education and outreach program was continued in 2013**
- **Overall the regulation compliance in the recreational fishery is good**
- **Recreational rule compliance needing improvement**
  - **“immediate” recording of crab on the catch record card (CRC)**
  - **Proper marking of recreational gear**
- **Closed season gear removal emphasis patrols continue to be successful at removing large numbers of “derelict pots”**

# Questions

